Rights Leaders Planning April 4 Tribute To King

James Farmer, former national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), will be one of several national and state figures in Memphis April 4 for ceremonies commemorating the 10th anniversary of the death of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Farmer is executive director of The Coalition of American Public Employees.

The ceremonies, which will include a march from the Clayborn Temple on Hernando to the Orpheum Theater and the showing of "I Am A Man," a 30-minute documentary film on King and the civil rights movement, will be sponsored by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Farmer will announce other plans for the day at a press conference at 11 a.m. Friday at the Holiday Inn-Rivermont.

Farmer, AFSCME president Jerry Wurf, Rep. Harold Ford of Memphis and the other speakers will be at the Orpheum Theater.

Rev. James E. Smith, director of AFSCME Local 1733, said he would ask city officials this week to proclaim April 4 a holiday. He said members of the local would not work that day even if the day is not a holiday.

Henry Evans, chief administrative officer for the city, said he had heard no discussions of the local's plans, but he said the city probably would follow the same procedures used in past years for allowing employes time off for the day. He said that policy allows any employe who gives prior notice to take the day off as vacation or leave without pay.

Yesterday a local group seeking $350,000 in community development funds to turn the Lorraine Motel into a national shrine said it will begin canvassing the city tomorrow in an attempt to gain support.

Charles Buford, spokesman for The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. & Lorraine Bailey Fund, said about 50 volunteers would be going "door to door and from shopping centers to airports" asking people to sign a petition showing support for the group's effort to obtain the funds to make the motel where King was killed 10 years ago a historic site.

Buford last year announced plans to purchase the motel and turn it into a shrine.

"We're competing against several other agencies (seeking community development funds)," Butler said. "In order to get it, we need people to get behind us."

Mrs. Edith Powers, chairman of the committee circulating the petitions, said the group will begin with about 500 petitions, with more to be printed as needed. She said the completed petitions will be turned over to Mayor Wyeth Chandler and officials at the Division of Housing and Community Development.

Mrs. Powers said Dallas has set up a shrine commemorating the site where President John F. Kennedy was assassinated and Los Angeles has done the same for Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. She said Memphis should also make such a move, adding, "Dr. King was the same caliber of person."

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